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NO FAMINE

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THERE is no famine in Orissa or anywhere else. Mr C. Subramaniam, the Union Food Minister, has said so three times; so it must be true. He is, in fact, in excellent company. In 1943 the British Government never declared a famine in Bengal; it was left to the Woodhead Commission later to record that nearly two million men, women and children had perished from the unfamine. Some Opposition MPs who recently toured the drought-affected areas of Orissa went back to the capital to say that there had been at least 50 starvation deaths. Not starvation, says Mr Subramaniam; only malnutrition or maybe undernourishment. The uninformed may affect to see no difference; but our bureaucrats know better. They know that, under the Famine Code of 1883, starvation deaths must lead to a proclamation of famine, which in its turn must place on the Government certain specific obligations. Implicit in the proclamation would be an admission of failure; our bureaucracy is brought up on the principle of "Never explain; never apologise". So there is no famine.

The politicians have their own reasons for fighting shy of so stark a word as famine; polysyllabic euphemisms are so much more comforting. Malnutrition sounds like a disease, almost attributable to the patient's misbehaviour or neglect. Undernourishment seems a necessary adjunct to underdevelopment, a word made almost respectable to a people denuded of all sense of self-respect by two decades of petulant begging. Mr Subramaniam, however, is being too clever by half. He summons ambassadors in New Delhi to tell them that his country is starving; then he goes to Orissa to say that the people there are not really suffering from famine conditions but only conditions of acute drought leading to acute scarcity. Could doublespeak go further? But famine, called by any other name, is famine still. Only the self-deceiving dying look for synonyms or substitutes for "death". The stony finality of a corpse, as seen in Orissa lately, spelt only F-A-M-I-N-E, so much more loudly than that celebrated neon-lighted Bayer advertisement in Germany.

All accounts make it abundantly clear that in Orissa, even this year a State with a rice surplus, the Government failed to recognize the drought and, even more, to provide for areas of acute shortage. That in a vast country like India abundance and scarcity should be unevenly distributed is at least understandable; that in a small State like Orissa affluent districts could not or did not come to the aid of the stricken areas indicates a state of affairs of which all should be ashamed. But there is an element of unreality in all our grieving over Orissa. The whole country is entering a phase in which many will go without food and then die of malnutrition or undernourishment. No serious effort has been made yet to increase agricultural production; no serious effort has yet been made to take the food trade away from those easily identifiable people who manipulate the market for higher profits. But all those political and administrative failures are as nothing when compared to the basic failure in human feeling. By its frequency and numbers, death has deadened all compassion, all charity. The lower division clerk who sits on a file containing an order for the shipment of foodgrains to a district in distress just does

not care to realize that the delay means death to so many. It just does not occur to the lazy deputy secretary that when he is arguing over his next posting and accompanying perquisites instead of doing his work some people may be starving. The politician, who sees a voter in every human figure and little besides, lets off dishonest food traders who may contribute generously to party funds—without a thought that for the donation of every ten rupees there may be a death to account for. There is a shortage of rice the world over; the real famine is of humanity. It has rained in Orissa and Maharashtra; there has been no rain yet on hearts that have dried up.

Mr Mehta's Mission

Mr Asoka Mehta's three-week essay in persuasion has ended. The agony is not however being followed by any ecstasy. We have gone on eroding our economic doctrines and political values; but neither the World Bank nor the U.S. administration seems convinced that the penance has run its full course. Mr Mehta went to Washington with two specific purposes: he was to use his charm to induce the U.S. Government to release the amount of \$285 million, which represents the undisbursed portion of last year's pledged aid withheld on the wake of our war with Pakistan, and he was to seek a prior commitment from the World Bank that its recommendation to the Aid India Consortium in regard to aid for the current year will be of the order of \$1,600 million. He has not received any assurance on either point. The bulk of the funds pledged last year but not given to us as an expression of American displeasure with our Pakistan adventure, Mr Mehta has been politely told, has meanwhile been used up elsewhere, presumably in Vietnam. The World Bank was equally coy about what it would suggest to the Consortium as a reasonable figure for the current year's aid commitment. No concrete recommendation can be made, Mr Mehta was informed, till a

'detailed' Fourth Plan has been formulated and its specifics have been discussed *in extenso* between the Bank and the Government of India officials. The annual plan hastily patched together for 1966-67 has obviously failed to impress the tycoons who talk in terms of 'development diplomacy'. They now want to go through our programmes and projects with a fine tooth comb and to sit in judgment over each single minutiae of our Plan. Since the Fourth Plan document is not expected to be ready before July, it will be easily three months from now before the Consortium countries could make any firm pledges for the current year. A sore disappointment to congenial lovers of America, those who naively believe that a mutation of our domestic policies will immediately loosen American purse-strings. There can therefore be no improvement in our foreign exchange position during the next few months, and therefore no extra import of spares, components and raw materials for our starving industrial capacity. What is even more disconcerting, despite the rigmarole the Bank is forcing us to go through, there is one news item which suggests that in any event the Consortium is not going to pledge one dollar more than what it offered last year, namely \$1035 million, a meagre three-fifths of what Mr Mehta has formally requested.

A pattern is now definitely emerging and much more than mere devaluation of the rupee might be demanded of us at this stage. Already about two years ago, the Resident Representative of the World Bank in New Delhi had prepared a document which elaborated a strategy of denying India aid funds for a period so as to coerce her into following policies worked out in Washington. The strategy could not be immediately put into practice, for a sudden unprovoked confrontation of this nature would have been condemned out of hand by all and sundry as a piece of unabashed blackmail. The Indo-Pakistani war, and its genesis in the seemingly tenuous nature of our claim over Kashmir, have now provided the Bank and the Western na-

tions with the opportunity for which they had been waiting for years. Nothing short of a total abdication of our sovereignty will now satisfy them. The U.S. administration will keep on providing us food, but nothing beyond. Supplying food is necessary to stave off an internal revolution and keep in existence the present Indian Government. By denying the same government the essential equipment, spares, intermediate goods and materials, they are hoping to be able to wrest the maximum concessions in the political and economic fields.

There is still time to effect a reversal of all this. Mrs Gandhi has talked of seeking foreign aid today in order to end dependence on foreign aid tomorrow. But there can be contrary views: aid can be habit-forming, and the attitude of our politicians and civil servants suggests that they are in an advanced stage of addiction. There are countries galore in the world who have developed without aid and we are confident that this nation possesses among its citizens enough talent and imagination to evolve a plan for economic growth with minimum external dependence. Almost every day the Government announces the setting up of commissions and committees to study this or that particular problem. And the Prime Minister has initiated a series of "round tables" for exchange of ideas with informed people in different sectors of activity. May we suggest that the commission a task force of five or six economists—the country can now boast of many—to prepare a draft within a reasonably short period, of a development programme which would only marginally depend on foreign munificence? Such as has been done so far along these lines had been generally vague and impressionistic. We believe our economists are capable of doing a more detailed, coherent and well-integrated exercise. They ought to be called on to perform this task, and, in turn they should receive the assurance that the Government would not balk at accepting recommendations which might cut across its own class interests. Or is this asking too much of the old, tired frame?

The Triple Fugue

Having solved all the problems of the world, Marshal Tito and President Nasser are now reported to be "waiting for a suitable time" to solve the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. This may dampen somewhat New Delhi's earlier automatic welcome to the proposal for an early "summit" with Yugoslavia, the UAR and India participating. The basis for the meeting, it is still claimed, will be non-alignment. In spite of the recent rebuke from Mr Krishna Menon, Mrs Indira Gandhi probably sincerely believes that she is non-aligned; thinking makes it so, however wishful the thinking. What is really surprising is that New Delhi should have preferred a meeting in New Delhi; Mrs Gandhi's entourage, we have no doubt, would much rather go to Belgrade where the heat is less oppressive. What are conferences for if they bring not comfort to our over-worked civil servants?

It is, however, possible that an early meeting with Marshal Tito and President Nasser will do Mrs Gandhi a world of good. On her last westward trip she seemed to be making every effort to avoid a stopover at Cairo, both on the way out and on the way back. New Delhi would, of course, deny this vehemently; but the fact was noticed abroad. A meeting with Nasser just before or after the Washington surrender would have been embarrassing. But there is little reason to think that a meeting now will be less so. To be respectable in the eyes of the new Djakarta is not necessarily an improvement in a country's inter-

national status. The awful truth is that Mrs Gandhi will have very little to say to Marshal Tito and President Nasser if and when they meet. In fact Messrs Nasser and Tito will not have much more to say to Mrs Gandhi on international affairs. This may be one reason why Kashmir has been trotted out as the talking point. Alas, this is the subject on which India would prefer silence.

There is thus really no point to the proposed meeting. The élan behind non-alignment has been dissipated by development over which neither India nor Yugoslavia nor Egypt could exercise much influence. There is now much less influence to be exerted by these three countries. Egypt, still calling itself the UAR although nobody knows why, is embroiled in Yemen in a fashion difficult for outsiders to comprehend. Yugoslavia appears to have resigned itself to a kind of harmless isolation from which Marshal Tito wakes up no oftener than once in six months or so. India, unable and unwilling to resolve her disputes not only with China and Pakistan but also with the Nagas and Mizos, is too preoccupied with domestic problems besides. It is difficult to see what she can have to contribute in her present state to international wisdom, if wisdom is what Marshal Tito and President Nasser are coming to New Delhi for, which is doubtful. To the pressure already in force from Washington and Moscow may be added another from Cairo and Belgrade. Not from one recent international gathering has India escaped unscathed; and that is a fact. But New Delhi's sole exhibition of firmness is in its refusal to learn anything from observation or even experience. So we will have one more conference to—begin many other conferences.

Peking's Latest

If it was a hydrogen bomb, scientists would concede that China has performed a remarkable feat—even France has yet to explode one. Reactions of politicians, however, would differ. Demands have been renewed that India go nuclear, by people who do not care to realise that it is be-

cause of the aggressive American presence on their doorstep that the Chinese are in a hurry. It may be said that the Chinese would never be able to catch up either with the U.S. or the U.S.S.R.—so vast and varied is their stockpile—but, as a French scientist pointed out, if Hanoi had possessed one or two nuclear bombs, the U.S. would not have behaved the way she is behaving now. The degree of the ability for killing and overkilling is not all that important.

It looks certain that the Chinese would develop a delivery system much sooner than anticipated. The U.S. has reasons to worry. The latest explosion, on the one hand, might encourage the hawks to press for a pre-emptive strike against Chinese nuclear installations; on the other, it might help those who are carrying on a ceaseless debate for a change in the U.S. attitude towards Peking. As for talks on non-proliferation, they will continue to be unreal so long as the two great Powers nurse, like cackling hens, their stockpiles while preaching to others the virtues of renunciation.



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The Year Of The Gun

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

THE American Broadcasting Company recently presented an hour-long feature on China. The title of the feature was *The Year of the Gun*. Film shots of China taken by foreign cameramen were shown along with clips of Chinese and Russian propaganda films; visitors to China, such as an American defector during the Korean war recently returned home, and noted author, Han Suyin, were interviewed. Finally, the questions were posed: Will Mao launch a war? Is China capable of fighting a major war?

The answer of the editor of the programme to the second question was, No. Life in China, the experts interviewed agreed, is much better than ever before. The American defector who spent eleven years in China, says that food is available and you do not come across sick, diseased children or hungry people in the streets; there are one million primary schools teaching one hundred million children the three R's. But the economic base is not strong enough to support a prolonged war with a powerful country such as the U.S.

As the editor summed up, China may still be primitive by Western standards. "But to be primitive is not to be weak. China sees herself as strong, in culture, in Marxian determination and in manpower". The last, "the ace in the hole", is most fearful. Whether there will be a major war with China will depend on whether "Dr Strangelove resides in Peking".

This programme seems to be an accurate reflection of the predominant American view. It has three elements: First, the belief that after all is said and done, China has proved able to keep her own house in order and make reasonable economic progress. A corollary of this belief is

that China's neighbours have performed poorly in comparison. Second, China's military prowess is considerable. You don't carefully weigh the strengths and weaknesses of a Power unless you consider it as a worthy opponent. Third, an undercurrent of fear of military entanglement with China out of a possible escalation of the war in Vietnam.

The Pentagon calculates that there is little risk of a war with China out of a stepped-up air warfare in North Vietnam. Many Senators, including Robert Kennedy, strongly disagree. Kennedy put this disagreement on record in course of a recent statement. Assumptions that further escalation of the war in Vietnam, more specifically, air warfare, involving the possibility of bombing "sanctuaries" in China, will not lead to a major war with China, Kennedy argued, are "not a sound basis for policy. Similar assumptions about the Vietcong and North Vietnam have been proven wrong time and again in this war".

Kennedy also disagrees with the holier-than-thou attitude taken by the Administration officials which was reflected in the ABC programme's argument that if a major war breaks out it will be solely China's fault. Kennedy argues that the U.S., North Vietnam and China—all—are involved in this escalation. "What is occurring in North Vietnam is escalation of the war by them or by us—the fact is that we are both inexorably involved. That fact and its implications must be faced".

Finally, Kennedy raises the question: how is an extension of the war into China going to help political stability within South Vietnam? "Premier Ky and the Buddhist Tri Quang do not talk with one another. Escalation of the war in the North, for which we must accept some responsibility, whatever else it is expect-

ed to achieve, will not bring these two gentlemen to the conference table with one another".

Kennedy is raising pointedly pragmatic questions on the conduct of the Vietnam war, differing from the Administration's thinking on practical grounds. In contrast, Fulbright takes a moral, ideological and historical view of the war in Vietnam. In Kennedy's criticism, there is no question on the moral right of the American presence; for Fulbright, this is the issue.

In a recent interview to the *Washington Post*, Fulbright said that he felt discouraged by the trend of thought on Vietnam. "The war fever is increasing. We Americans are so powerful, so self-righteous".

"Mandate From God"

In a surprisingly strong statement, Fulbright told the *Post* that American leaders are acting as if they had "the mandate from God".

"We can lord it over everyone and knock the hell out of everybody. It would be too bad for us, but I guess we're going to do it. If we keep on like this, we're heading for a downfall sooner or later." The *Post* reports that Fulbright is giving a series of lectures to the John Hopkins School for International Studies. The title of the lecture series is *The Arrogance of Power*. Their theme can be glimpsed from the statements and interviews he has been giving in recent months, some of which I reported in these columns.

As the Pentagon argues that further escalation in Vietnam does not involve a risk of war with China, Kennedy says it does and Fulbright complains that the U.S. is in a mess of its creation in Vietnam ("I think if we had never stuck our nose in this business it would have long since been settled in accordance with whatever the major forces in Vietnam were"), the problem, however, remains that there seems to be no way out for the Administration, short of unilateral withdrawal. This the U.S. cannot do because of the American military prestige involved. Right or wrong, American defence forces are

committed; and Americans learn from their childhood that the American army has never been defeated in war.

In ultimate analysis, therefore, the unenviable American position in Vietnam resulted from folly and miscalculation and is perpetuated, now, by American pride. Official spokesmen will shake their heads violently in disagreement and will present all kinds of argument in defence of the American action in Vietnam. But, you read between the lines of recent reports on Vietnam, of the recent statement of Ambassador Lodge in Saigon, the contradictory statements of Senator Russell, Chairman of the Armed Forces Senate Committee who would one day say that the U.S. should get out if the Vietnamese don't want us and the next day would advise stepped-up bombing in North Vietnam,—and the facade of ideology and confidence tends to crumble.

As Richard Rovere of the *New Yorker* shrewdly noted in a Washington despatch, even in the darkening gloom of the recent political events in Vietnam, the Administration, harried, confused and distressed, seems to find a gleam of hope: "There have always been people here who have felt that while withdrawal on our own initiative would be dangerous and dishonorable, there would be little cause for regret if we left in response to a properly issued and worded request to do so, and it has been reported from time to time that the President himself was attracted by this possibility. But in the past few weeks the numbers of those who took this view have swelled astonishingly, and several officials of imposing rank—men on whose diplomatic and military advice the President has frequently acted—have now come to feel that the latest manifestations of South Vietnamese instability are making our role militarily almost impossible and politically insupportable, and that the best that we can hope for is the ascendancy of new leaders who will ask us to leave".

Rovere's analysis underlines the desperateness of the situation as it is viewed in Washington. There is, it is felt, a genuine search for a way out

of Vietnam, and while the Pentagon may think of war in Vietnam coolly, in terms of more troops and more bombings, politicians seem to be awakening to the futility of the war and looking for a safety-valve device. The U.S. will, on the one hand, look for such a device on its own and on the other, offer one to Hanoi and the Vietcong. The ABC programme suggested that the U.S. should offer a face-saving formula to China. Which means that behind the battle of arms, there may be going on a discussion of different formulas for the eventual withdrawal of American troops.

If one such formula can be devised whereby America can withdraw without losing her prestige, the year of the gun may be transformed into a year of truce over a futile war over unmarked graves.

Disenchantment

In my despatch entitled *The Tarnished Image* (Now, April 1), I quoted from Selig Harrison's sombre prognosis of the Indian political scene. Harrison, a staff member of the *Washington Post*, is what an American would call a "regular guy", meaning a middle-of-the-road, politically non-denominational journalist. The left-liberal journalist and author, I. F. Stone is not so "regular", his views on Vietnam are parallel to Fulbright's. He has recently written a stinging comment on India which is worth quoting, for it reflects the growing disenchantment of the American left liberal thinkers with India's performance. It corroborates my view that India's stature has gone down in the estimate of not only the Right and the Centre, but also of the Left. Until a few years ago, India led by Nehru, was a darling of the liberal thinkers here and all over the world who were searching for a force in between the monoliths of the aggressive capitalism of the West and the aggressive Communism of the East. They seem to feel that their hope has been belied.

Stone writes: "Far be it from us to disturb the romantic euphoria of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Washington. But, in all objecti-



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vity, it should be noted that Asia's biggest 'bulwark of democracy' has a very poor record indeed when compared to its, and our, rival Communist China.

"China managed to emerge from terrible years of drought by its own efforts, without either United States or Russian aid. Strict rationing prevented famine. Peking has been able to run a small foreign aid programme of its own, to make the atomic bomb and to achieve considerable development.

"In the present Indian food crisis, as in every one we can remember back to that in World War II, a major

factor has been the inability of Indians to curb their own speculators and hoarders. Behind the facade of democracy in India there operates an Oriental Capitalist class of merchants and usurers quite content with human misery and squalor from which it profits.

"It is delusion to think that this archaic, badly organized and decayed society can provide a show-case for democracy in Asia. On the contrary, it can only discredit democracy in the eyes of a new generation impatient with old evils and permanent hunger".

Can There Be An India Revolution?—II

NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI

I HAVE now to consider the positive forces behind revolutions, whose complete absence in present-day India has led me to the conclusion that there will never be any in this country. I have categorized them as, genetical, social, and ideological, and, logically, the discussion of the first, should precede that of the two others. I shall, however, take the social and ideological forces first, and then consider the genetical.

Now, all revolutions are set in motion by the energy derived from the unsatisfied aspirations of a class which is rising in social and economic importance; in fact, it is seen to be one which has already made considerable headway, but is not getting its full share of political power owing to the resistance of the previously existing regime. In other words, revolutions are class and not mass phenomena, and they are fully involved in the process of the rise and fall of classes. They are analogous to the working of a great hydro-electric project: that is, there must be both a dam and a reservoir to generate the motive power.

Any number of examples of this

might be given from history. The Russian Revolution was the natural product of the rise of the new Russian middle-class intelligentsia. The Meiji Revolution was the self-assertion of the minor Samurai. But the most striking illustration comes from the archetypal, revolution—the French, which was the work of the Third Estate, *Le Tiers Etat*, consisting of the bourgeoisie, the workers, and the peasants, with the first playing the leading and positive role.

The unsatisfied aspirations of the Third Estate were summed up tersely in the famous pamphlet of the Abbé Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?*, published in January, 1789. It began with three questions and answers—

"What is the Third Estate?—*Everything.*

"What has it been until now in the political order?—*Nothing.*

"What does it ask?—*To be something.*"

Even the aristocracy did not deny that the bourgeoisie were important. They showed that by marrying into rich bourgeois families. But at times they made their recognition valueless

by their snobbery. When the extremely snobbish Madame de Grignan was asked why she had married her son into a bourgeois family, she replied characteristically, "It is necessary to manure even the best fields." That was what created trouble, for the bourgeoisie did not like to be considered only as the beneficial cowdung for the aristocratic fields. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a great aristocrat summed up the grievances of the bourgeoisie in the following words:

"The bourgeoisie had in general an education which was more necessary for them than for the aristocrats, who obtained, by reason of their birth and wealth, the first places in the State without merit and talent, whereas the others were destined to languish in the subordinate ranks of the army. In Paris and in the bigger cities the bourgeoisie were superior in wealth, talent, and personal merit. They had the same superiority over the country nobility, and were nevertheless everywhere humiliated."

The social discrimination was blatant. Madame Roland, the famous revolutionary figure, visited the chateau of Fontenay with her mother as a young girl. They had to dine with the domestic staff. In the house of the Duke of Penthièvre, who was a most affable and hospitable man otherwise, the nobles dined with the master of the house, and the commoners with his first gentleman and came to the drawing-room only for coffee. It was not surprising therefore that *égalité* became a greater object in the French Revolution than *liberté*.

The Revolution of 1830 was the second round of the same bourgeois revolution, called forth by the fact that the power of the bourgeoisie was challenged by the legitimist movement under Charles X. The next revolution, that of 1848, had a coalition of two classes behind it: the bourgeoisie who had become dissatisfied with the growing conservatism of the Orleanist monarchy and the working classes who were becoming a new power and had

besides, acquired an intellectual leadership in the Socialist thinkers. But the two classes fell out, and George Sand told de Tocqueville before the workers' insurrection of June: "Monsieur, try to persuade your friends not to drive the people out into the streets by worrying or irritating them, I should like to induce them to be patient, but if the fight begins, believe me, you will all perish." This did not happen, and though the fighting was severe the workers were crushed by the bourgeoisie.

Already Arrived

There is no comparable social class from which a revolution can be expected in India. The only class which superficially appears to be revolutionary is a class which is already arrived, not arriving. Therefore it is also an exhausted class, a class which lacks what scientists would call valency, in their social, economic, and political life. Indeed, as could be expected from this fact, the class has already failed to carry out a revolution, and it has shown no revolutionary *élan* in the last eighteen years.

The exhaustion is easily explained. For something like forty years before independence all the revolutionary ardour of this class, which had reached the peak of its social and cultural development by about 1910, had become concentrated in and reduced to the effort to free India from British rule. So, with the achievement of that aim,—and that, too, through historical circumstances,—no aspiration remained except that of enjoying the material benefits of independence which came to the Indian middle class with an abundance not foreseen even in their wildest imagination. No one can be revolutionary with such prosperity, or even with the opportunities for prosperity offered by the existing conditions.

Of course, the great majority of the middle class have not gained much, if they have gained anything at all. But this is not making them capable of a revolution; on the contrary, the same deprivation has made them less so. They are the broken-spirited

have-nots of the exploiting class, the weaklings who did not get their share of the loot because they were driven away by the stronger adventurers. Therefore they have acquired all the characteristics of people who have accepted defeat. Their only resource is impotent, sterile, and unpractical grumbling. Revolutions are not brought about by sulking. It is the tiger or the leopard which becomes a raider of the village cattle-shed if deprived of its natural prey; street curs, however starved, only snarl and do not bite. Our fiery revolutionaries in talk, when it comes to that, do not even vote against the Congress, for their interests, exiguous as they are, remain tied up by their class affiliation with the corrupt and inefficient oligarchy that the Congress has become.

I do not think I shall have to go to the same length to explain the role of the ideological forces in revolutions, for their importance is more widely realized than that of the classes. So I shall just remind the reader of the so-called *philosophes* and of the Socialistic thinkers in preparing the way for the French and the Russian Revolution respectively. I might add that the publication of three histories of the first French Revolution by Michelet, Louis Blanc, and Lamartine gave a powerful impetus to the French Revolution of 1848. They made a cult of the first revolution and wrote prophetically. I quote only Louis Blanc:

Epic Heroes

"At the moment when I am going to evoke you—O shades cherished or condemned, tragic phantoms, heroes of an incomparable epic! I have difficulty, I confess, in restraining my emotion. I feel that my heart is brimming with respect and fear."

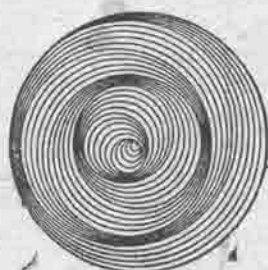
Yet Louis Blanc was a cold and dogmatic man. The peculiar exultation in holding opinions which, on the face of it, were arid, explains the terrifying power for action which the ideas generated. I have not read a more forceful summing up of this relationship between ideas and actions

than in the words of Albert Sorel, of which I give an English translation of mine:

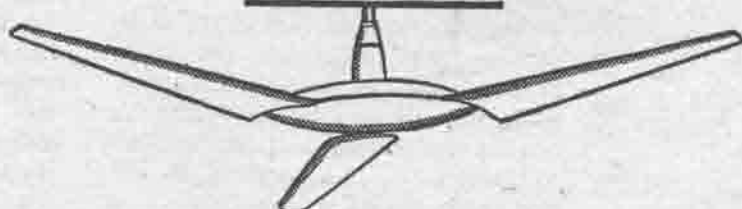
"Revolution ceases to be an event, to be just a series of real and contingent facts; it becomes a doctrine, religion, a deity. The philosophers who had prepared the way for it, repudiated 'this fury of conquest', 'this cruel and sombre religious faith'. They boasted that they were anti-Christian, many plumed themselves on being atheists. Nevertheless, their disciples go about in the manner of the most strictly fanatical sects. It is no longer even the crusade against the Albigensians to which one can compare their bloody missions, their ferocious inquisitions, their frightening autos-da-fé: one must go back to Islam and its conquering propaganda to discover in history examples of irruptions which were as frenzied and of apostolates as formidable. 'With one hand they hold up the sword, and with the other the Rights of Man', cries out a contemporary. They have their violent missionaries, their neophytes, and their martyrs. That is because their doctrine, like the dogmas of religions, is universal, exclusive, and despotic. There is only one truth, and they are its prophets. The world is corrupted, they have the task of regenerating it. They are virtue herself incarnate: their mission is to establish the reign of virtue. Fanaticism, as an Absolute, is always identical in all its forms: so the fanaticism of reason inevitably cast itself in the mould of the fanaticism of faith."

Communism created the same relationship between ideas and actions. Anything more arid and unpassional than the doctrines of Communism like dialectical materialism and economic determinism cannot be conceived of. Yet Communism has not led to less fierce crusades than Christianity. Toynbee has again and again drawn the parallel of Sorel with Islam in connexion with Communism, which, of course, shall be patent.

No one expects ideas of this order, with such a potential for action, in

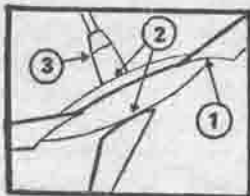


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India today. But, certainly, it is not unreasonable to think that there should be a body of live ideas comparable to those with which the Liberals in England started their administration in 1906, or Labour in 1945. Even this reformist ardour was not strong in 1947, and whatever of it there was, has completely disappeared today. The place of ideas has been taken by mechanical catchwords which hypnotize the ruled, and the insincere platitudes which keep the rulers in power. Neither can rouse anybody to any kind of action.

Thus it is not surprising that even passion should have disappeared from our thinking and writing about our existence in the era of independence. I think I can claim that I am the only Indian writer whose books and articles reflect some passion arising out of and relevant to our present condition. In others I see only the feeble responses of an anaemic satiety or anaemic resentment. And it is certainly no fault of mine if in me this passion is tragic, rather than exultant. No man or woman who has a living neural response, not to speak of a living psychological response, can help being sad and angry in our present circumstances. Anyhow, right or wrong, at the age of sixty-eight I have both ideas and feelings. Others seem to have only complacency, or at best feeble discontent, and catchwords to throw at me and delude themselves with.

Biological Decay

This leads me to the genetic factor, for such an absence of social and ideological forces for change among a people who need a revolution badly, could not have been met with unless there was a definite decline of vitality, which is a biological factor. The more I observe, the more is the conviction being deepened in me that we Indians are in the clutches of a biological decay, and since in this field the human will can do nothing and the biological wind bloweth where it listeth, I am compelled to take a very deterministic view of our prospects.

Let me, however, briefly set down the manner in which genetic forces

work in bringing about social changes, including political revolutions. First, there is in all societies possessing any vitality a regular incidence of the birth of talent, genius, and personality. In this respect India seems to have entered a sterile period. For something like fifty years not one outstanding personality in any field has been thrown up by the biological process. In the past, say, in the really vigorous epoch of the national movement, the political leadership in India was staggered in age-groups. For instance, in 1920, with Tilak dying and Nehru and Bose to emerge soon, the ages were—Banerjee 72, Tilak 64, Malaviya and Motilal Nehru 59, Lajpat Rai 55, Gandhi and Sastri 51, C. R. Das 50, Vallabhbhai Patel 45, Jinnah 44, Rajagopalachari and Mrs. Naidu 41, Rajendra Prasad 36, Jawaharlal Nehru 31, Subhas Bose 23. This impressive procession of generations is no longer seen. Most of the politicians of today are either physically senile old men, or mentally senile young men, with hardly anything to choose between the two.

This terrible genetic fact makes me impatient of the continuous complaints that I hear about the failure of the leaders and the absence of leadership. If it is so that is because the people as a whole have reached such a state of decay that no leaders or even exceptionally able men are *being born*. No growing society even in a crisis or catastrophe which results in the elimination of a whole class of old leaders, ever fails to throw up new leaders from the younger generations. I shall illustrate this with an example which is very striking. The French Revolution at one stroke removed the old military leadership of the French army, because it was provided by the nobility, and France was attacked by a European coalition determined to put down the Revolution. The French people did not whine, nor did France fail herself. Military leadership is far more difficult to replace than political leadership, yet young soldiers rose who were to fill the military annals of France with glory. I give the names of only those soldiers who became Napoleon's

Marshals, and their ages at the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789:

Augereau—32; Bernadotte—25; Berthier—36; Bessières—21; Brune—26; Davout—29; Gouvion-St.-Cyr—25; Grouchy—23; Jourdan—27; Lannes—20; Macdonald—25; Marmont—15; Masséna—31; Moncey—35; Mortier—21; Murat—18; Ney—20; Oudinot—22; Poniatowski—27; Soult—20; Suchet—19; Victor—25. Napoleon himself was 20 in 1789.

Admitting that the present leadership in India is decrepit why is the country incapable of producing new men like this? In this connexion one might refer to the age of the Russian military leadership during World War II. If India has become barren, the explanation is also simple: To me she is the continent of Circe.

The second manner in which the genetic force operates lies in the birth of a large body of men who even though they constitute only the rank and file of the nation, are positive, virile, and have a fighting spirit. If these men are threatened with deprivation of the elementary rights and privileges of human beings, such as food, clothing, or houses, they do not whine, but seize these by force, or bring about such a change in government as will bring back and ensure normal life. In fact, the leaders at a given moment are only the crystals in this saturated solution of national energy. Thus, the absence of leadership is closely related in India with the poor quality of the general human material. From such a material no revolution can be expected.

These then are the reasons which have led me to deep scepticism about the possibility of a revolution in India. But behind these absences lies a pattern of behaviour which prevents the growth of a feeling for a revolution. The Hindus are not given to combating evil in the worldly order with positive reactions and offensive actions. They have evolved a highly developed technique of passively enduring oppression and deprivation of all kinds. So, when they are in trouble, they generally fall back on their capacity for enduring and suffering, instead of rising actively for their rights.

Factions And Pretences

MOHAN RAM

A showdown inside the Congress Parliamentary Party is coming and the elections for the executive, slated for May 16, would be the end of all pretences. A bi-factional situation exists in the Parliamentary Party and the first shot in the campaign was fired by the Prime Minister's supporters when they got a story published in one of the Delhi dailies. The Morarji faction was supposed to be making an open bid for control of the party. One thought that as long as there was a contest it was fair enough. And what about the attempt of the other group to retain control of the party?

The factions are not prepared to postpone the tussle to 1967. Everything is heading for an early showdown. Mr Hanumanthaiya, a prominent supporter of Mr Morarji Desai, had warned in January, soon after the Prime Minister's election that factional politics would enter the Centre. It was possible in the past to pretend that there was no factionalism at the Centre. Now it is not.

Factionalism came to the Centre with Mr Lal Bahadur's election. Mr Morarji Desai and those with him have always thought that he had been tricked out of office in the name of a consensus. The anti-climax to the consensus myth came at the Bangalore session of the AICC last year when Mr Morarji Desai raised issues of propriety regarding the second term for Mr Kamaraj. Matters did not end there. The Morarji Desai group made no secret of the fact that they were going to fight it out at the next AICC session scheduled to be held in New Delhi. If a Congress President could have a second term under special circumstances, it was for someone to decide what the special circumstances were to be and who was to determine the existence of such special circumstances. It was Mr Desai's bad luck that the AICC session never took

place because of the Indo-Pakistani hostilities.

Between Jaipur and the AICC session in Bombay later this month, the factional fight would have acquired a new edge. Whether Mrs Indira Gandhi knows it or not, she is the leader of a faction—or a syndicate or a consortium of factions. And to see the hand of the Morarji group in every move for opposition to the Government's policies betrays a certain lack of understanding of the power realities in the Congress. If the Morarji group is making a bid to capture the party, what is really wrong about it, unless of course, it is convincingly proved that there was no factionalism in the past?

The Prime Minister's supporters wail that the support she is getting from certain quarters is unsolicited. If Mr Frank Moraes wrote a blurb, which was an exquisite piece of brocade word-weaving, it was not her fault. In fact, such support is supposed to be causing her a great deal of embarrassment. And the story of the advisers. Everything is sought to be blamed on the advisers. But some of those who honestly believed it was so now admit in private conversation that the Prime Minister is rather apolitical and she does not quite realise what her officials are signing away.

The storm signal has been hoisted and whatever the outcome of the contest on May 16, it is certain that the bitterness it will bring in its wake would cost the ruling group dear. Those who thought that there could be no showdown in the coming twelve months do not think so any more.

Perhaps there is truth in the contention that the out-group is trying to capitalise on the reaction some of her policies have brought about. Her usual following is not really with her on the fertilizer deal and the Foundation. But in all fairness, how can the Morarji group be accused of exploiting this situation for its ends?

Meantime, the Government plods on, unsure of itself. As predicted in these columns, there is pressure for opening up new fields of industry to foreign private capital. It is now

learnt that we are not getting aid for fertilizer plants even on the terms that were recently proposed. The Madras refinery agreement has run into a hitch because the Americans want a share in the management also. There are reports that the World Bank is setting new terms which were not mentioned in the beginning. Even the officials who enthusiastically welcomed the terms are a little rattled at the enormity of the concessions that are being demanded.

It is so with the Foundation too. The other day, Mr Chagla sought a meeting with the 54 signatories to the statement against the Foundation. He tried to explain to them that Indian interests would be safe in the Foundation and the apprehensions were unreal. But in the debate that has been going on outside, it is being suggested that the opposition to the Foundation comes mainly on ideological and not on educational grounds. Even if some of the arguments are ideological, one fails to understand what is wrong about them as long as they are valid arguments. The Government of India tried to slide back on the original draft agreement. (There is story that the draft does not exist and everything was agreed upon orally. This is incredible but the Congress Parliamentary Party executive which demanded a copy of the draft has not got it yet!) But now it is a little too late. The Americans are firm on a bi-national executive which would comprise Indian and American representatives on a parity basis (nine and nine.) The American Congress would not permit any deviation from this. India is already committed to this position, it would seem, and hence the reluctance to go back on the Foundation. True, the VOA deal was scrapped at a very advanced stage. But who knows that the Foundation has not reached a more advanced stage?

Jan Sangh Line

It was surprising that of all the parties, the Jan Sangh opposed the Foundation idea at its Jullunder session. The Jan Sangh is trying to pretend that it is an innocent in Indian poli-

tics. The tone of speeches by the delegates from the non-Hindi States drove home the point that Hindi could not be the sole integrating factor. The Jan Sangh has piped down on the Hindi issue.

But what is more interesting is the trend of discussion at the closed door meeting of the executive on election strategy. The Gwalior line which rejected electoral alliance or understanding with the Right CPI and the Muslim League has been given up. One of the leaders said that in 10 years, the final showdown in India would come, between the Communists and the Jan Sangh and therefore it would be unwise to pamper a potential enemy by having an adjustment with it now. But the general trend was in favour of abandoning the Gwalior line and possible understanding with the Right CPI and the Muslim League. Perhaps this is what one of the leading papers meant when it captioned a report with the sentence: JAN SANGH COMES OF AGE.

I (John Scott, Time reporter) told him (a prominent Soviet journalist recently back from North Vietnam) many serious American journalists considered it quite possible that the United States would undertake a pre-emptive strike to destroy China's nuclear potential. He commented: "It is conceivable that the USSR might find it necessary to undertake a pre-emptive strike against some future West German nuclear threat. If we did this I am confident that we would inform the United States beforehand, and that we would contrive to make our attack a response to some German provocation, which would relieve the United States of responsibility to retaliate under its defensive alliance with the Germans. I hope that you would extend the same consideration to us if you decided on a pre-emptive strike against China."

Report in New Statesman

I think the Pakistanis have a right to protest to the Americans for arming India.....

Letter in Newsweek

Commentary

Verbal Camouflage for Foreign Aid

OUTSIDER

NO reasonable man will or can object to superficial or conventional talking in politics. It is of the very stuff of politics. Alexis de Tocqueville finally summed up the importance of this activity for politicians. "The essence of the profession as it concerns the head of a party", he wrote, "consists in mingling continually with his followers and even with his adversaries; in projecting himself and letting himself be seen from day to day; in lowering and raising himself every moment to reach the level of all intelligences in discussing and arguing without end; in repeating a thousand times the same things in different forms; and in animating himself eternally before the same objects".

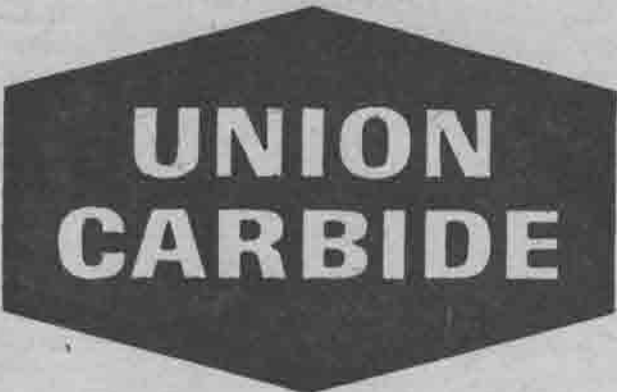
But that was the political talking of the father of the present Prime Minister of India, and that remains in a more or less artistic form the political language of the Philosopher President. For instance, in unveiling a portrait of Nehru the other day—which to judge by the reproductions which have appeared in the newspapers is hideous—he declared that "poverty and social evils must be ended" in India. Nobody—even Dr Radhakrishnan will agree, can utter such profundities outside politics.

But the talking by most members of the present Government is not even this language. It is altogether a different employment of human speech. Of this kind of talking it has been written in a recently published book on India: "Hindu Gurus, that is, spiritual guides, always initiate their chelas or disciples into the use of drugs, especially ganja or bhang (*Canabis indica*), which are supposed to give beatific visions. The secular Hindu Gurus have not given up the tradition, but the drug they offer is

different. It is the most harmful drug made in India today, which if taken in large quantities—and the quantities administered are large—completely destroys the faculties of thinking and observing. I shall call it Logosane, a meaningless, tasteless, colourless, but intellectually asphyxiating substance, turned out from the only really efficient mass-production factory established in India since independence, namely, the Nationalized Factory of Words".

This stupefying talk-ganja is, of course, most eloquent or strident when foreign aid is the issue, which is natural—for the present régime will not last a year without foreign aid. Let me give a few examples. The newspapers reported that the Prime Minister had hit out at the critics of foreign aid. When, however, I read the language in which the hitting was done, I did not feel that I had even been hit with a feather-pillow. It was the kind of talk with which we poor men in a certain civil condition are well acquainted. The unrefined call it curtain lecture. She said or is reported to have said that if people said that she had sold out India, they insulted not only her, but even the great Indian people who threw out the mighty British Empire. I would instantly retort: *Non sequitur*. In that case, it would be an insult to the great Indian people to say that their existence is threatened by a small and weak country like Pakistan. It would be no less an insult to refer to such historical facts as two hundred years of British rule and 550 years of Muslim rule in India. The Indian people were politically sold then, and may be sold again, without having much to say to it themselves.

Then comes the performance of Mr Asoka Mehta in Washington. The weather reports on his mission have been showing a very unsteady rise and fall of mercury. But he was obviously worried by the American anxiety over Indo-Pakistan relations, and is reported to have tried to reassure the American public by saying: "The strongest proof of India's peaceful intent could be found in the selection of a woman, Mrs Indira Gandhi,



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as Prime Minister. No nation contemplating a war would select a woman as war leader." What a statement to make not only in these days of feminism, but at any time in human history. Mr Mehta might have given the American people credit for being acquainted with the names of Boadicea and Joan of Arc, perhaps even with those of the Empress Theodora and Queen Zenobia, even if they knew nothing about Chand Bibi and the Rani of Jhansi. Then Mr Mehta said that even if he had not got dollars he had got a *meeting of minds*. He was indulging in literary reminiscence by half. The true echo would have been *marriage of minds*: "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments".

Last of all comes Mr Sachin Chaudhuri. He said that it was important only to distinguish between *hamstrings* and *guiding strings*. It was not even a bad pun. Hamstring means this when it is a noun:

a. In man, either of the two groups of tendons bounding the upper part of the popliteal space at the back of the knee. The outer hamstring is the tendon of the biceps femoris; the inner is composed of the tendons of the semimembranosus and the semitendinosus muscles.

b. In quadrupeds, the large tendon above and below the hock.

Hamstring as verb means—To lame or disable by cutting the hamstring or hamstrings.

The strings which the Americans are to prefer in dealing with the Government of India should be called *halters* in idiomatic English.

But one would never blame the politicians for palming off such verbal drugs on us. If we are *ganja* addicts, we shall have *ganja*.

The day I arrived in Rangoon... all the talk was about a (U.S.) State Department official's pronouncement reported in the Burmese press. He said that America did not threaten to intervene immediately in Burma, but that there was 'existing' though classified, a contingency plan.

Dorothy Woodman in New Statesman

Calcutta Diary

J. MOHAN

MOVEMENTS initiated by the Left in this State, have acquired a familiar and monotonous pattern: periods of tension marked by general strikes and hartals which gradually taper off into conventions and meetings followed by long periods of relative inactivity. Every five years there are general elections—a period of hectic activity. Interspersed are sporadic outbursts of popular feeling for which the Government blames the Left but which are more in the nature of elemental outbursts of frustration than anything else. They express, perhaps, the dissatisfaction of the people over the failure of organised political forces to lead them anywhere as much as their wrath against government policies.

The recent convention of the United Left Front fitted into this pattern. It marks the tapering-off phase of the recent movement. It is to be followed by more conventions in various parts of the State. These are expected to fill in the gap till the next general strike or hartal which might be called during the lean months ahead. And after that the general elections.

This does not mean that the criticism of Government policies is not valid or that at the convention some of the suggestions made to combat the food crisis are not sound. But it is intended to imply that something more was expected of this convention than the usual ritual of resolutions and speeches that is gone through on such occasions.

The food situation in this State has not improved since the last general strike. Events in neighbouring Orissa are a portent of the shape of things to come in West Bengal. The continued drought leaves little cause for doubt that the worst is still to come.

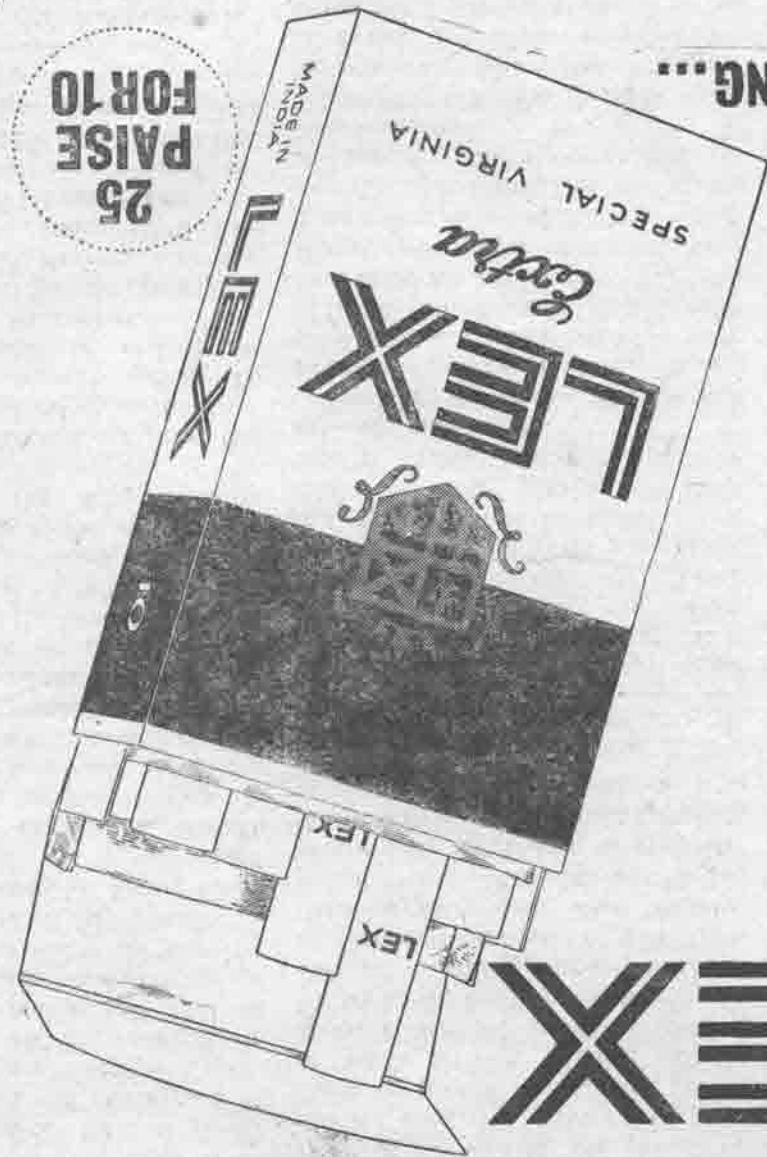
And rice is not the only commodity in short supply today. The mustard oil crisis is on again. Oil mill owners demand an upward revision of prices.

The Government is making a great show of holding out against this pressure and refusing to revise the rates. Traders of course couldn't care less. They are already charging rates that are anywhere between eight annas and a rupee per kilo above the controlled rates. Not satisfied with this they are withdrawing stocks from the market to prepare the way for an even steeper rise. Other edible oils are already selling at Rs 5.50 a kilo and mustard oil prices will probably be brought on a par with them. Controlled prices of fish bear no relation to the prices openly charged in the markets.

The most alarming developments are taking place in the rural areas. Having evaded the levy—which in any case did not involve more than a small part of the surplus at their disposal—the jotedars have now managed to send their stocks underground. From this underground reservoir a steady trickle is flowing from the low-income rural areas to the high-income pockets in the urban areas now mostly under statutory rationing. Numerous devices are used to keep up this flow. The simplest, the 2 kilo rule, allows any person from a non-rationed area entering the rationed area to carry 2 kilos of rice. Through this loophole tons of rice are being smuggled across. Behind-the-scene operators employ an army of women for the purpose. This is going on right under the nose of the police. As a result of this steady drain, even the surplus districts are being denuded of rice and the low-income groups in the rural area will soon find themselves in the plight in which parts of Orissa already are.

With the situation thus heading for a major crisis, the responsibility of the opposition parties does not cease with criticism of Government policies, however correct the criticism might be. Even suggestions regarding alternate policies are not enough. There is need for active intervention in the situation at every stage by keeping track of the operations and manipulations of hoarders and blackmarketeers, organising the people to resist their depredations, exposing and com-

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hating the methods used by jotedars to conceal stocks, evade the levy and smuggle rice into the rationed areas. Much of this activity would not have any spectacular value or make newspaper headlines but it would lessen much of the frustration and cynicism that is becoming so dominant a feature of the popular mood. Such actions are taking place here and there under popular initiative. In Coochbehar, for instance, some time ago popular pressure led to the arrest of a large stockist, the seizure of his stock and to its distribution at controlled rates. The local bureaucrat had to do what the people wanted him to do.

Such activity on an extensive scale of course presupposes a wide network in the rural areas and it is this that the Left parties still lack. But the effort has to be made.

The water crisis is becoming acute. In the rural areas, once served by ponds, wells or local streams, the sources are drying up. Urban areas are not much better off.

Calcutta, for instance. According to the Municipal Act a minimum of 35 gallons of filtered water per day should be provided to each inhabitant in the Calcutta Municipal area. The city's present requirements have been assessed at 144 million gallons a day. This is based on a figure of 29 million for the present population of Calcutta which is undoubtedly a gross underestimate. The actual supply till a few years ago was only 72 million gallons of water or exactly half the requirements. After ruminating over the problem for several years the Corporation decided to increase the supply of fresh water and a plan for laying a seventy-two inch pipeline to take the place of the 60-inch main that connected the Tala reservoir to the Palta pumping station was drawn up. This of course is old history because the decision was taken more than a decade ago. The actual installation of the 71-inch main was over the award of contracts for this completed only a year ago. The scandal that rocked the State could furnish material for an epic which I leave to abler

hands. For the purposes of my story what is relevant is that after all this hallabaloo over the installation of this pipe line we seem to be no better off today than we were before. At best the supply has increased to about 80 million gallons which is still miles away from the target of 144 million gallons.

Even unfiltered water is in short supply. The two pumping stations at Watgunje and Mullick Ghat that were set up ages ago can no longer supply even a tenth of the requirements of unfiltered water. Among other things this has led to the abandonment of what was once a regular feature of Calcutta—the washing of streets every morning and afternoon. The familiar sound of the hosepipe that broke the morning slumber of many is no longer heard. It is surprising that in a city where few things are allowed to pass without a protest hardly a voice was raised against the decision to stop the washing of streets.

The scarcity of water has other consequences too. It is generally agreed—no less a body than the World Health Organisation has concurred with the view—that the wide incidence of epidemics in Calcutta of cholera, typhoid and other gastro-enteric disorders owe their origin to the insufficient water supply in the city.

But there is hope around the corner. In the air-conditioned offices of an imposing new building that has sprung up on the ruins of what was once a part of Calcutta's China-town a group of fair-haired blue-eyed experts are hard at work. They are drawing up plans that will give us water just as their countrymen have given us food. Of course there is a price that will have to be paid for the water. The price tag is not yet visible but the first distant glimpse of it was in a recent Act passed by the West Bengal Assembly which shows that local self-government will be on the way out. Not that many tears will be shed for the loss of powers suffered by the Calcutta Corporation but the Metropolitan Board

that will come in its place may bring with it problems yet unknown.

It was feared in certain quarters that the present apathy would affect the proceedings of the non-official commission of enquiry into the recent disturbances, but on Monday the hall was crowded. It is to be hoped that the commission would get full co-operation from the public. That the police seldom learn from their experiences was seen recently at Howrah and in the way they lathi-charged people in front of Rabindra Smarani on May 9. In fact, there are reasons to believe that they have no instructions to act tough.

The mechanics of bringing out this weekly on Wednesday prevents any comment on the the meeting of the Left C.P.I. politburo.

The Press

A Daughter's Dilemma

COMMENTATOR

THOSE who sat down to make an assessment of the first one hundred days of Mrs Indira Gandhi's prime ministership overlooked the basic difference between the situation in India and that in the countries which made such assessments fashionable. Inder Malhotra of *The Statesman*, who set the ball rolling, was frank enough to admit that he had borrowed the idea from the U.S. of President Kennedy, but others were not. Some kind of stock-taking followed also the completion of Mr Wilson's first one hundred days as the Prime Minister of Britain. Both of them were heading a new party in power, and that was the justification for examining how far away they had travelled from the policies of their rival parties which had been rejected by the electorate. Mrs Gandhi's prime ministership should mark no such beginning; she has inherited policies which the country endorsed four years ago, and it is her business to follow these policies. Any departure from

them would be a violation of a pledge and an undertaking.

Yet the assessments are being made as if with her a new party had come to power. Those who had seen in her election as the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party a dynastic element at play and bemoaned her amenability to influences of crypto-Communists have suddenly discovered in her an unsuspected pragmatism which could urge her on to paths discarded by her predecessors. Her success is being measured by the gap between her policies and those of her father, and judging by the compliments she has received from the Press the gap is indeed wide. The Press comments are also a warning that she could count on the support of newspapers only if she continued to move away from the policies formulated by Mr Nehru and endorsed by the electorate.

Somewhat unhinged by elation, Frank Moraes of *The Indian Express* has burst into a language hardly in taste in relation to a woman Prime Minister. "Mrs Gandhi has guts and is about the only man left among the old women of the Congress". He advocates a change of India's policies at home and abroad. A foreign policy of non-alignment allows a government a large amount of elbow room, but such a policy has to be intelligently pursued with a meticulous eye not only on the next consequence but on the consequences thereafter. Similarly, on the economic front at home, if the no-changers had their way, there would be no end to the dreary and disastrous talk of democratic socialism and the Welfare State which has landed India in the mess in which it now is. "India's primary need is change, not no-change". He is happy that the vast cavity in the thinking of doctrinaire theorists has been exposed and that Mrs Gandhi has realised that India's problems were problems of growth, inevitable in a country striving to combine idealism and pragmatism in its quest for economic progress and development. He raises cheers for the Prime Minister for sailing into her critics, massing significantly with both eyes on the

general elections not only from the Opposition Left but from the Congress Right.

In a subtler way S.M. of *The Hindustan Times* has supported Mrs Gandhi's deviation and advised her to prepare her political ground wisely enough and patiently enough. Discussing the mental make-up of the average Congressman he says that after a long period when a Congressman was expected to produce an automatic reflex of distrust of foreign capital, to welcome controls as an end in themselves, to be on guard against the American power to corrupt, he is being asked to relax his attitudes, to accept that performance is a valid test of where we are going. S.M. is not surprised that the Congressman is as bewildered as Pavlov's dog when the accustomed bell is not followed by the accustomed plate of calf's liver. Without concealing his annoyance at Congress members of Parliament he says that unlike Pavlov's dog the Congress MP may also not be certain where to jump, especially in an election year with his ticket at stake. Some of these bewildering questions are: Is the policy of change the policy that is winning? Why are the Prime Minister's colleagues, always excepting the politically unweighty Asoka Mehta and Subramaniam, silent? Why is the Congress President renewing his emphasis on socialist principles? S.M. is of course all in favour of the Prime Minister's "bold stand" for pragmatism, for policies that must meet the test of performance, for self-confidence in our relations with other countries in place of fear and suspicion, for a forward, go-ahead look in policies. But he reminds the Prime Minister that the challenge of development calls for new ideas, new vigour and new talents and "we are not going to get it from a party which refuses to move with the times".

The Foundation

It has taken a debate in the Congress Parliamentary Party to persuade newspapers to a scrutiny of the proposed Indo-American foundation. The fears expressed by some MPs were endorsed almost simultaneously

by nine educationists, mostly from New Delhi, who in a long letter to the Press have detailed the reasons for objecting to the foundation. They conceded that an open society like ours should be prepared to expose itself to ideas from any source and face the consequential risks. Their objection is not to the setting up of one or more institutions propagating American point of view; but they maintain that an opportunity should be given for all ideas to contend freely against each other and without vantage positions being yielded to any party. The proposed foundation places one party in a very strategic position in the Indian educational world and endows it with resources which could be used for supporting persons and institutions committed to a particular point of view and for discriminating against those expressing other points of view.

The Times of India, which published the letter, rejected the arguments advanced by the educationists, though it acknowledged that the proposal for a foundation had attracted criticism from quarters other than those ideologically hostile to any kind of cooperation with the United States. The paper does not question that the U.S. would be capable of wielding "considerable influence" on Indian education through the foundation. But the assumption that the influence so wielded will be inconsistent with the national interest or that the Indian members of the board of management will be unable to resist it is "surely nothing less than abject defeatism". There is time yet for India to protest should there be any reason for doing so but the supposition—already confidently arrived at by the signatories of the letter—that the foundation will reflect the U. S. Government's ideological bias, that it will hold a strategic position in Indian education, that the Indian members of the governing body will be sympathetic to the United States and that such Americans experts as are sent out will be of indifferent quality, is "staggeringly premature". The paper calls these assertions "remarkable", not so

much because the United States is not above taking advantage of its generosity—the paper sees nothing wrong in it—as because it betrays such “miserable lack” of self-confidence on the part of those whose particular ideology seemingly is always to except the worst.

Taking an exactly opposite view *Patriot* has advocated rejection of the whole proposal like the VOA deal earlier. For neither the explanations offered by the Government so far nor the advantages claimed for the foundation by those who want to defend it because it has an American interest have been able to remove widespread fears in this country that it will be a means of foreign intrusion into our educational system. The U.S. suggestion that the foundation should have a board on which there will be as many Americans as Indians makes it suspect. There are enough experts available in India who ought to know how research and education should be organised to serve the national interest. The Government would be guilty of unfairness if the protests by members of Parliament representing all shades of public opinion and many leading professors of Delhi University are dismissed as inspired by ideology. The issue should not be reduced to the petty problem of whether the Indian representatives on the board will be able to hold their own against the Americans. The objection to the foundation is primarily one of principle, and no foreigner, in whatever guise, can be permitted to interfere in our decision on educational policy.

The recent disclosures about the CIA in the American Press have provoked the following piece from *Patriot*:

Twinkle, twinkle little spy/Who I wonder put you guy/Up above the world so pink/Like a saucer in the sink/When the bally sun is on the run/And the blinking moon is on the wane/Then you show your snooping form/Twinkle, Twinkle Peeping Tom.

Behind The Dark Glasses

CHIDANANDA DAS GUPTA

NAYAK is the second film of his for which Ray has written the story himself, and it has considerable resemblance to the first—*Kanchanjanga*. There is the same strong unity of time, place and action, and the massing of types. In *Kanchanjanga*, the mountain is the focal point; here it is the film star, almost as legendary in relation to the characters and the audience, as the mountain. The place, instead of Darjeeling, is the train both isolating the characters from everyday life and bringing them together for a brief while. In place of colour, there is the perpetual movement of the train as the extra dimension. *Kanchanjanga* too, was a lightly sketched tragic-comedy, at the end of which there is a touch of feeling between a man and a woman—a spark of understanding whose further possibilities are left hanging regretfully in mid-air.

But *Nayak's* tragic-comedy is far more skilfully blended, firmly constructed, spontaneous, and surer in rhythm. It has a pace as brisk as of the speeding train on which its action takes place. The sense of timing and the ear for sound are superb, the visuals are less delicate, more firmly etched. The elimination of the decorative, which has been an essential element of Ray's style, makes the whole treatment more 'modern'. By itself this is neither good nor bad; but in the integration of the whole, in the pace and tenor of the film, it plays an important part, and brings something refreshingly new to Ray's film making. Although the shots are not held contemplatively, they become memorable; the camera's swing back and forth between Uttam Kumar's profile and Sharmila Tagore's in a long dialogue scene; the two trains crossing in the night; the shining railway track speeding past while the hero has the thought of suicide; the sick girl's endless stare from the upper berth.

The starting point of *Nayak*, as in

many of Ray's films, is a powerfully simplified framework of familiar types and expected events. A strong foundation is laid by introducing characters, issues and situations which are already widely known; by accepting, instead of repudiating, the popular notions of the matinee idol. The glamorous front, the timorous soul, the fear of impermanence, the uncertain border between dream and waking, the self-pitying loneliness, the death wish. From the beefcake poster to the popular-critical post-mortem of Marilyn Monroe, the full spectrum of already-existing reactions to stardom is here, laid out for one, defying the discovery of one trait that one had not suspected. The star is presented as a broad type, surrounded by other, equally broad types.

But as in so many of Ray's films, it is in the process of acting-out his destiny that the type turns into the individual. This is achieved by injecting, into the expected pattern, that quality of the unexpected which is the hallmark of life.

The comedy aspect is brought out in the elaborate joke at the expense of the audience and the star system. Also of some of the other typical, and somehow allied, products of our times—the brash advertising executive, the globe-trotting businessman, the throat-spraying, perfume-splashing salesman of religion (an American friend once described this tribe to me as 'Marwaris of the spiritual world'). The hero's early mentor, a fanatical devotee of the stage who urged him not to go into films, reads him a delightful lecture on stage and film acting. 'Film has nothing to do with art' he says, 'the actor in a film is a puppet—the film has a business aspect determined solely by supply and demand'. Indeed this 'Shankarda' is so doggedly opposed to the cinema that in the hero's dreams, he refuses to help his fallen disciple out of a pit in a desert made of currency notes. This first dream sequence could have been hila-

rious if it had not been for the sympathetic note on which it starts. It is a compendium of all the popular notions of the nobility of art and the evils of money—the simple dream of a simple man who believes in it all and is unable to do anything about it. But I felt that Ray is a little unsure of his mixed intentions in this 'dream sequence'.

The second dream, or nightmare if you like, belongs to the tragic side; it too, is a little spooky, but it is more complex, and brings out more of the hero's inner problems. Sumita Sanyal is a fleeting glimpse of deliverance for the loveless who vanishes through a beautiful white door into a crowd of people all of whom wear dark glasses, like himself.

The tragedy lies in the film star's genuine sense of loneliness, his fall from the innocence of idealist youth, his need for a Fellini mother-woman in whom he can bury his troubles. The children on the train are the only people with him he can be natural; and the only ones who come anywhere near to understanding him are women. His early schooling in reality was with a leftist political worker who continues to exercise a powerful attraction on him, but whom he cannot join. His fall is from humble and real origins to a bottomless pit of glamour and money in which he is shut off from the very audience that pays for his luxuries, by a wall of glass (actually symbolised as such when the train stops at a wayside station). That is why, of all the adults on the train, he is most attracted by the sharp-witted young journalist—cunningly played by a shrewdly cast Sharmila Tagore—who is at once the least and the most curious about him. She is the one who wants to see the eyes behind the dark glasses. She wears glasses too (although not dark), and he remarks on the freshness of her face when she takes them off. She is, in the beginning, a bit of a poser herself; in the end, behind the smart spectacles, she reveals eyes as ready to give solace as he is hungry for it. Instinctively, he knows this, and having first brushed off her request for an interview on real issues,

goes back and tells her everything. And being young and innocent, she is the one who understands his loneliness, his slavery to glamour and money, his need for drink, his death wish. But for her, the borderline between dream and waking is clear.

One could glibly say that since Uttam Kumar plays the matinee idol no acting is required of him. But this would not be true, for he turns in a fine performance with all his cinematic sense and without most of his mannerisms. In the scenes of his humble origin, his apprenticeship in acting, continued at the edge of political meetings while his leftist friend harangues the labour, he reminds one of the early promise he had shown in *Champa Dangar Bou* and *Saheb Bibi Golam*. The scene of the shocked return from the political meeting where his friend lures him after he has become a star, shows the full power of his acting as much as the director's masterly handling of the situation. The anguished grimaces in sleep, the bliss of drinking tea out of a mud cup at a village station where nobody knows him, the silent communication with the sick girl in the compartment, the thought of suicide at the open door as the train shatters through the night—are all realised simply and effectively. It is always difficult to draw the line between the actor's achievement and the director's in such perfect moments; yet it is obvious that this actor is not Shankarda's 'puppet' in the creator's hand.

It is the types who are pinned on the wall and left wriggling that do not have a chance to turn into individuals—such as the advertising executive—the whole episode of his using his wife to promote his business, and the resulting estrangement with his wife smacks of the falseness of the estranged couple of *Kanchanjan*. This sub-plot runs a parallel course to the main storyline until the wife wants to go into films—to the horror of the husband. All the other types—the toothless old puritan (Brahmo), the glib businessman who lectures on the superiority of American films, his wife (superbly played by Bharati Devi)

and daughter, the middle-aged couple which puts Sharmila up to the interview—share a common interest in the man behind the dark glasses. It is this universal interest that Ray cleverly exploits to turn out a brilliant, provocative film tinged with the sadness of a *dolce vita* which is not the monopoly of film stars, and therefore signifies more than its immediate subject.

Tears, But No Terror

BY A FILM CRITIC

THE *Shop on the Main Street*, the much praised Czech film, has some shades of unreality. Why should the carpenter (played almost to perfection), who is shown at the beginning to shun his goose-stepping, collaborationist brother-in-law, succumb to the tempting offer of running a Jewish shop as an Aryan after being treated to vodka and sausages by the same man? Perhaps it is the influence of the nagging wife that does it. The second element of unreality is the dream sequence which overtakes the carpenter at the moment the expulsion of Jews is about to start—it gives you the feeling that everything will be all right in some other world. As the story draws to a close and the carpenter kicks off the stool he has climbed to hang himself, the dream sequence is repeated at length, washing away all the traces of the brutality inherent in the situation in Slovakia in 1942.

A new wind has been blowing in Eastern Europe where young folk perhaps no longer respond to the brutal impact of a film like *Professor Mamlock*. The approach in *The Shop on the Main Street* is much to mellow to convey the horrors of anti-Semitism. But despite an undercurrent of sentimentality it is a remarkable picture. The carpenter and the old, almost-deaf Jewish woman who lives in a world of her own, are unforgettable. Thank God, there is not the slightest attempt to depict the carpenter as a people's hero.

Two Plays At Mukto Angan

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

MANJARI Amer Manjari, produced by Nandikar, is an adaptation of Chekov's *Cherry Orchard*. The substitution of the cherry trees by a mango grove is, however, not its only point of dissimilarity with the original. The spirit of Chekov has also been debased by the inverse alchemy of the adapter.

The drama depicts the transition of social classes through the change of ownership of a country estate and the reactions of the people involved in the event. As the curtain rises, we see the owner and her entourage arrive at the estate. The family fortune is on the wane and the estate is threatened. A young man, the son of a former servant of the family, suggests that the property may be saved by sacrificing a part—the mango grove—to make room for a housing colony. The owners are shocked; for, the stately mango grove is not only a symbol of the family status but also a thing both beautiful and fruitful. Nothing, however, can stop the remorseless advance of the duns. The estate falls under the hammer. The new owner, none other than the ex-servant's son, moves in. The old owners pack up and leave to the dirge of the falling mango trees. An epoch comes to a close, another begins.

The play, which bears the polish of other Nandikar productions, is, by and large, rather tame and marred by an undertone of sentimentality. The latter is seen as its most intense in the old servant, a man grown older than Methuselah in the service of the family. While the lady of the house after a spell of moping and sobbing, reconciles herself to the loss of the property with the adventitious assistance of a Marxist intellectual, the event proves too much for the old servant. Before the curtain rings down, he hobbles on to the centre of the empty stage, mutters something into his beard, and dies in the best thea-

trical tradition of the Bengali stage.

Manjai Amer Manjari is redeemed by the acting of Ajitesh Banerjee. Distinguished throughout, he shows his full stature as an actor in the scene where he announces himself to be the new owner. The bravura with which he recounts his victory at the auction, his hysterical glee at the possession of the estate and finally his feeling of guilt at being an usurper show his rare power to register varying emotions quickly and with ease. It is Banerjee who gives a positive quality to the play whose virtues are largely negative.

Interrupted Rehearsal

In contrast to *Manjari Amer Manjari*, the writer who adapted Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of a Dramatist* has done a fine job. And he is fully backed up by the proceedings on the stage.

The play opens to show a theatrical rehearsal in all its confusion... the players chatting and moving about, the director shouting last-minute instructions to the stage hands, and exhorting everyone to get on with it. In a few moments, order is restored and the rehearsal begins only to be interrupted by a ghostly procession of six characters in search of a dramatist. The rest of the play shows the re-enactment of the lives of the six characters while the theatrewallas look on. It is a tragic story that the characters unfold, a story whose climax is an unwilling incest between step-father and his step-daughter.

Although this sounds like a quasi-Greek tragedy, the play turns out to be not half as macabre. For none of the onlookers believe a word of what they see and hear. The director watches everything with artistic detachment... applauding a particularly telling delivery, editing the excesses that may offend the public, casting his players in the various roles, and even interrupting the incest scene to let his 'artistes' have a stab at it.

The players, angry because of the reversal of their roles from actors to watchers, interject levity and sarcasm into the most poignant moments of

the drama of the six characters. All this, somehow, does not do any violence to the tragic core of the play; rather it serves to deepen the tragedy by providing moments of contrast and relief.

The acting, both individual and group, is first rate. The stage hands look and behave like stage hands. The actors and the actresses, with their little tantrums, look no less real. The prompter etches a little cameo. The director builds up a character, loveable and convincing, displaying an extraordinary comic prowess. Of the six characters, the step-father plays his role with restrained power. But the palm easily goes to the wronged daughter whose words and actions hit the audience with the impact of a sledge hammer.

To sum up, the cunningly produced and well-acted play has that rare quality which makes you laugh and cry at the same time.

Post Script

The reviewer feels that he owes an explanation to the readers as to why he does not mention the names of the principal roles and those who play them. This is because, unlike other groups, such as Souvanik, Nandikar do not provide these bits of information to theatre-goers. Why not, one wonders.

Rabin Mondal's Paintings

BY AN ART CRITIC

RABIN Mondal is well known to visitors to Calcutta's art galleries. His 14 oils and several drawings now on view at the Priyadarshini Art Gallery, Refugee Handicrafts, 9B, Esplanade East, are, in style, a continuation of his earlier paintings exhibited in one-man and group shows in the city during the last few years.

His forte is the cone on which he varies his compositions. Cones spiral upwards from his canvases, now in the shape of church steeples, and again disguised as sails of boats. The variations on this basic motif often remind one of Gaganendranath's cubistic experiments with arcs. As in the

latter's paintings, in some of Rabin Mondal's oils like "The Castle", half hidden stairs disappear from one curve into a distant parabola which, again, winds away upwards.

Sticking to the same style and developing it towards further abstraction, may have some advantage for the artist, if he is a powerful colourist like Rabin Mondal. The consistency has helped Mondal to evolve an individual style which gives his paintings an unmistakable stamp and makes them stand out from a crowd of insipid neighbours in a group show. But in a one-man show the artist should seize the privilege of putting in new experiments, a few departures from his old style. Wandering round the gallery, I felt at times a bit bored. There was little to distinguish one painting from another. All, with the exception of a few, seemed to be repetitions of swinging curves and arcs. I feared that Mondal's style was freezing into a dead pattern.

A few words about the gallery. In a city where there is hardly an art gallery worth the name, any addition to the existing ones, however small the space might be, is welcome. The organisers of Priyadarshini have plans to make it a permanent gallery with paintings of less-known young artists of the city on view for sale. We wish a better rehabilitation for Priyadarshini, which has found a refuge, we hope temporarily, in a cramped corner of Refugee Handicrafts.

Letters

India And China

Mr Samirgati Ray (May 6) advocates direct negotiation with China for a peaceful settlement of the border dispute. While his arguments seem reasonable, I doubt if China will even respond to any good gesture India might make. While Soviet Communism wants peaceful co-existence, Chinese Communism preaches violence, hatred, and distrust between one nation and another and acts in

a way which is not conducive to the true spirit of Communism. If it is contended that supply of American arms to Pakistan in the past was intended for use against India, a similar inference can be drawn from Chinese military help to Pakistan. This help is surely not out of affection for Pakistan—a country wedded to theocratic dictatorship.

Mr Ray credits Mr Nehru and Mr Shastri with sincere endeavours for peaceful settlements, but I fail to understand how Mrs Gandhi has retarded that spirit.

AMIKYA KUMAR MITRA
Calcutta

A Postscript

Could I be allowed to add a delayed postscript to the controversy raised some time ago apropos of your editorial comment (December 24, 1965) on the activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom? Mr A. B. Shah, writing (January 28) in defence of the CCF and its Indian Committee, was indignant at your comment that the U.S. Department of State might have provided some inspiration for the CCF, and remarked as follows: "Indeed, I would like to suggest that he [your commentator] may next connect the CCF with the CIA instead of with the State Department. After the example set by the PKI, there is no justification for any communist (sic) for adopting half-measures in abuse".

Mr Shah was absolutely right; you should have shown the perspicacity to link the Congress for Cultural Freedom with the Central Intelligence Agency. The series of articles published by the *New York Times* last month have carried details about how, over a long period, the CIA has subsidised the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The University of Calcutta, and such other universities in the country as have joined hands with the Indian Committee of the Congress to co-sponsor 'educational' seminars, can be legitimately accused of promoting CIA causes.

R. K. MADHAVAN
Calcutta

Primary Teachers

Calcutta Diary of April 29 gave a good analysis of the political game with primary teachers. I wish to add a few words.

From my experience I know that the rural Congress bosses try to hook job-seeking young men with the bait of employment in primary schools. Young hopefuls who pass the School Final examination after many financial difficulties run attendance on the local leaders for a favourable gesture which will enable them to have a job. Even after appointment they must pay allegiance to the party in the form of direct participation in campaigning and wielding influence on the illiterate masses before the elections. Anybody treading on the Congress toes will be transferred to a distant school so that he may mend his ways under the pressure of disquieting circumstances. Determined efforts should be taken to put an end to this evil practice.

DEBASISH MUTSUNDI
Ichapur, 24-Parganas

Mudrarakshas

As one of the spectators at the Minerva on the Monday night your drama critic refers to (*Now*, April 22). I may be allowed to point out certain inaccuracies and irrelevances in his criticism.

He has observed, "At one end there was the once innocent teacher whose corruption through romance was too profitable to be true". Unfortunately, the fact is otherwise. The profitable corruption does not appear to have followed in the wake of romance.

Secondly, the fact of commissioning an announcer is interpreted to indicate the absence of an end in the play, the playwright is held guilty of breaking Aristotle's head. Your critic should have realized that the din to which he refers in the concluding sentence was the reason for calling an announcer. And the music was not 'Marseillaise' but the Internationale.

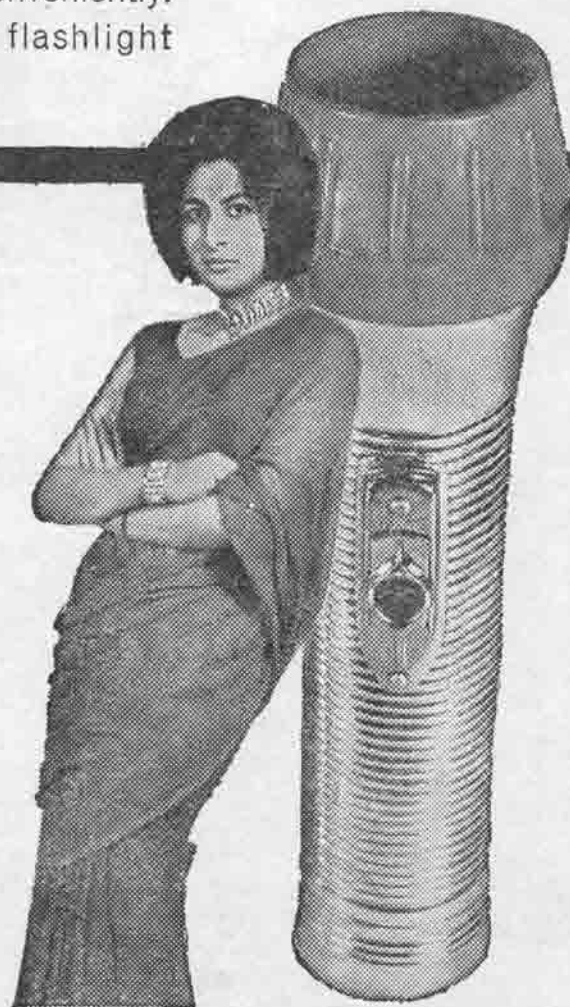
KAMARSHYA CH. GHOSH
Calcutta

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